

SBDC State Advisory Council Meeting
Montana Department of Commerce, Helena
8/1/12

Meeting Start: 4:20 p.m.

Attendees:

Advisory Council Members:

Carol Cunningham (Ronan), Kevin Keeler (Helena), John Cech (Helena), Lisa Ballard (Bozeman), Peter Christ (Red Lodge)

Ex-Officio Members:

Steve Price, SBA District Office, Helena
Andy Poole, Montana Dept. of Commerce, Helena

Montana Department of Commerce:

Dore Schwinden, Montana Dept. Commerce, Director, Helena
Ann Desch, Lori Gilliland, and Ronja Abel – SBDC Lead Center, Helena

SBDC Service Center Directors:

Dan Anderson, Helena
Julie Jaksha, Butte

Welcome and Introductions

The Council members introduced themselves and their businesses or industry. Steve Price and Dore Schwinden commented on how the Advisory Council can assist the SBDC Lead Center: Let people know about the existence of the SBDC Program and provide suggestions on how to improve the SBDC Program.

PowerPoint Overview of SBDC Program

Lori Gilliland, Associate SBDC Director, gave a PowerPoint presentation overview of the program and highlighted the statewide network of SBDC business advisors. Lead center staff fielded Council questions regarding operations of the network.

There was discussion about more and better marketing of ProfitMastery, available online and in a classroom setting through a few SBDC offices. The council recognized this as a good opportunity for small businesses to learn about how to financially manage their businesses for profitability. Several council members volunteered to try the program and give the lead center feedback. The Council had the following suggestions for marketing channels:

- Word of mouth
- Monthly bank statement advertisement (Credit Unions, Wells Fargo Bank, Stockman Bank, etc.)
- Bankers' Association (newsletter)
- SBA District Office Lender Relations Reps
- Accountants
- Trade Associations (e-mail blasts)
- SBA monthly spot on civic TV
- Lead Center's list of who has started/completed the training course

The lead center will follow-up and create a brief plan for promoting ProfitMastery and a promotional piece for distribution which incorporates these ideas.

There was discussion about promotion of SBDC services: placement of success stories, testimony from clients, the involvement of the local economic development organizations in promoting the SBDC, and how to reach local legislators by district to inform them of the SBDC program's existence.

Brief Break for Light Dinner Buffet

SBDC Highlights-Regional Service Area, Helena

Dan Anderson, SBDC Director, located at Montana Business Assistance Connection, Helena, gave an overview of the SBDC service area that includes Lewis & Clark, Meagher, and Broadwater Counties. Dan presented success story examples and his performance outcomes as a hand-out. He explained the targeted industry approach to counseling businesses, and fielded general questions from the Council as to subcenter and network operations.

SBDC Highlights-Regional Service area, Butte

Julie Jaksha, SBDC Director, located at Headwaters RC&D, Butte, described her southwestern territory of seven counties and fielded questions from the Council. Julie gave examples of the kinds of businesses she has helped in southwest Montana. She explained how each SBDC regional area is different in its service delivery and program offerings to meet regional business needs, and the difficulty of how to market consistently as a statewide network.

She provided an overview the SBDC Network's Invest in Success conference, in its third year, to be held in Butte on April 24th and 25th, 2013. The keynote speaker will be Michael Shuman with an emphasis on value-added agriculture. Also planned: workshops for September 24th- 26th with Bruce Baker, a nationally renowned merchandizing expert, who will conduct training in Deer Lodge, Ennis, and Butte. A member of the Council made the suggestion to bring together host organizations to support the conference.

Mid-Year Performance Update

Ann showed how the statewide network is still meeting or exceeding its SBA goals, although average annual performance over the last five years is trending downward. Discussion revolved around the oversight (performance reporting and reviews) required by the SBA and Congress that can make the SBDC program highly accountable but also onerous.

Wrap-Up/Questions/Suggestions/Comments from Council

There was some discussion by the Council on the effect that reporting has on the quality of counseling.

Steve Price made the comment that a new electronic Montana SBA District Calendar for business trainings will be available soon so that SBA resource partners can work collaboratively to schedule trainings.

Appoint Council President

A motion was made by Andy Poole and seconded by a Carol Cunningham to appoint Kevin Keeler (Coffee Shack, Montana Maid Coffee) of Helena as SBDC Advisory Council President. The motion passed unanimously.

Other Public Comments

There were no comments.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.